

2019 OPRA Year-End Summary - NJ OPRA Blog

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Happy 2020! This year, we anticipate the release of very important decisions by the Appellate Division and New Jersey Supreme Court on police body camera footage, use of force reports involving juveniles, internal affairs records, and the names of employees who are fired for misconduct. We'll keep you posted as these decisions come in.

In the meantime, we reflect upon another great year working alongside journalists, non-profit organizations, and individuals to make New Jersey more transparent!

2019 Successes by CJ Griffin and Pashman Stein Walder Hayden:

- Our petition for certification was granted in [Libertarians for Transparent Government v. New Jersey State Police](#), which means we'll be arguing before the Supreme Court later this year regarding why OPRA requires disclosure of the name of a trooper who separated from employment because he or she engaged in "racially offensive" behavior.
- We launched the Justice Gary S. Stein Public Interest Center at Pashman Stein Walder Hayden so that we can continue to tackle government transparency issues, including increasing our pro bono appellate advocacy work in OPRA and OPMA cases.
- In part due to our OPRA work, Pashman Stein Walder Hayden won the Appellate Department of the Year Award by the *New Jersey Law Journal* for the second year in a row.
- A trial court imposed \$1,000 willful violation penalties upon a mayor and clerk in [The Record v. Borough of Englewood Cliffs](#). There have only been a handful of times where these willful violation penalties have been imposed, but the threat of the penalties (which must be paid personally by the employees, not the agency) dissuade agencies from blatantly violating the statute.

- We convinced a second court that an elected official's Facebook page was subject to OPRA in Wronko v. Borough of Carteret.
- CJ Griffin published an article in *New Jersey Lawyer* about access to social media accounts in OPRA.
- We successfully fought back against an agency that tried to impose a \$200 service charge for capturing a few screenshots in Wronko v. North Arlington.
- We represented *The Record* in a year-long battle for records relating to a deadly virus outbreak at the Wanaque Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation. The *Columbia Journalism Review* wrote about it. The lawsuit is still ongoing.
- We sued Raritan Township for records relating to a DUI arrest of a County Freeholder.